

Devotional and Selections

DEUS EX MACHINA.

By Dr. W. L. Watkinson.

I noticed a little while ago in an American paper a story of an engineer in one of the electric-power companies. It seems that during the night he was oiling the machinery, and in the act of oiling the machinery he must have been killed. His corpse was found the next morning when the dairyman came on the scene; but the singularity was that all night long that wonderful, truthful, precise mechanism proceeded without a mishap attended only by a corpse. Such has become the human-like character of mechanism that it pursues its way without the intellectual master. The mechanism proceeds; the engineer has passed away. There are great numbers of men who look at nature like that. They have been greatly impressed with its balancings, its reciprocations, and they have come at last to believe that it is self-sustaining, that all its movements are automatic, and that all its consequences are inevitable and necessary. Great Pan is dead; but the music proceeds. The great builder and architect has become a myth, but the structure stands. The special organism is undisturbed. Let your poets find scarlet for the corpse of the dead Deity; let your saints bury him, and your theologians bewail him. But let practical men rejoice in the self-sustaining, self-developing, and self-sufficing universe.

Now that is the position of a good many men today. But the truth is that the more complex a thing is, the more it demands a creator; and as we perceive the wondrous constitution of things, the arrangements and articulations and movements of the world, it is more imperative than ever that we believe in a wise Creator, in an omnipotent Ruler, and in a King who moves all things to one distinct and splendid issue.

"OH, FOR THE GIFT OF VISION!"

Oh, for the gift of vision, that we might behold the teeming marvels and delights of this fair earth, whose most modest shapes are rich in bloom and beauty! Oh, for the gift of faith and love, that we might interpret truly the events of life, and find in each a theme for delectable song! Oh, for the heavenly charity which can recognize in our brethren patience, kindness, and heroism, where a niggling intellect can see nothing but imperfection and failure! Oh, that we might behold with open face the goodness of God in Jesus Christ, and live in the spirit of adoring wonder and loving consecration! If we do not grow in grace, let us turn over a new leaf; let us try the focus of appreciation instead of that of criticism; let us be freer to see the beautiful, to appreciate the good, to praise the high; and if we are only humble, sympathetic, and pure, the glory and joy of life will stand freshly revealed in everything, the law of praise will be on our lips, and in the genial glow we shall grow as flowers and palms in the sun.—W. L. Watkinson.

"PRESERVE ME FROM MY CALLING'S SNARES."

The need of this prayer of Charles Wesley outlasts his day and generation. Each of us has a calling of some sort, and it is comforting to feel that the "call of the ministry" is not the only effectual call to service. The one who felt that he was "called of God to be a cobbler" and to mend shoes to the best of his ability, translated the thought of high calling into common speech. When it is once settled for us, and "we know our calling," we must "therein abide with God." But sacred as this is, and secure as we are of the blessing in the fulfillment of the calling, whatever it may be; eager as we must be to be found faithful, whether successful or not, we are beset with snares even here. We should not think it strange, so long as we are human and not angelic beings. The very fact that we are called of God and ought to magnify our calling, and discharge it the best of our ability, may beguile us into overestimating our own particular business or burden. A passion for finishing may tempt us to pursue our special work with an energy that drives all before it, and crushes many a blossom of opportunity by the way. Too narrow an interpretation of "This one thing I do" may lead us to overlook the interlinked and wayside services that belong also to us. We may miss a blessing as well as lose it, and absorption in our individual calling—in the house, the store, the office, anywhere—may cost us dear and defraud others, which is worse. Another snare of the calling diligently pursued till practice makes perfect to a degree, is undue inflation thereat. A subtle self-confidence unconsciously gained may swell into self-glorification and gloating over others. It is not premeditated, not even acknowledged to ourselves, but the snare is there, and it is spread in the daily path of downright duty. Another possibility is the danger of perfunctory service when duties themselves become "vain repetitions," no more instinct with life and love than idolatrous oblations perhaps. When the calling has to do with sacred things, familiarity and a certain facility may tend to make them common and mechanical. By intricate and unseen ways unwary feet approach the net spread. No one besides God and ourselves may know when we are "snared and taken." All the more we need to pray "Preserve me from my calling's snares," for in and above all else we are "called to be saints."—Julia H. Johnston, in *The Interior*.

A QUIETING FACTOR.

These busy, rushing lives of ours need often to be tranquillized by this thought of the Sleepless Watcher. When perplexities and irritations multiply, when our hands seem too full of urgent duties, when the temptation is fierce, when we are disappointed in others or alienated from them, when we have lost the zest of existence, the thought of his all-encompassing, brooding, tender care and watchfulness comes in to quiet and uplift our spirits. All we have to do is to stop the wheels for a few short minutes and lift our thoughts humbly and earnestly to the great Companion by our side. And we shall know that he is there.